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R A D I O F O R U M

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Forum ..... Mr. Tilman Durdin  
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of the  
"New York Times"

Mr. George K.C. Yeh,  
Resident Representative  
of the  
International Publicity Board  
of the  
Chinese Government.

Mr. O.D. Gallagher,  
"Daily Express"  
War Correspondent.

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R A D I O F O R U M

ANNOUNCER: Radio Forum. While the German armies batter at the outer defences of Moscow and struggle into the Crimea and the Don basin, the situation in the Far East steadily crystallises round the nuclei of Chinese resistance to aggression and British preparedness. In tonight's forum, you will hear Mr. Tilman Durdin, Far East correspondent of the "New York Times", Mr. George K.C. Yeh, Resident Representative of the International Publicity Board of the Chinese Government, and Mr. O.D. Gallagher, war correspondent of the "Daily Express" discussing the Russo-German and the Sino-Japanese wars in relation to the Far East generally. Mr. George K.C. Yeh will speak purely as an individual observer; not in his official capacity.

GALLAGHER: Well, Durdin, Moscow's still holding out.

DURDIN: Yes, and Russia is still the key to the Far Eastern situation. I think that as long as there is really effective resistance by the Russians against the Germans, we'll have peace in the Far East.

YEH: Yes, peace outside China perhaps.

GALLAGHER: That's it. - Japan is once again emulating the jackal tactics of certain parts of the Western end of the Axis, - Italy, I mean. Just as Italy waited to stab France in the back after the Germans had knocked her out, so Japan waits for her chance to stab Russia in the back in the Far East, - except that there isn't a Quisling in Russia to betray her.

YEH: But there's really no comparison in the situations of France and Russia, - Russia is so much more powerful and solid - and vital.

DURDIN: Yes, I think their strong, effective and resolute resistance will continue even if Moscow fails. Russia survived the capture of Moscow in 1812; she will certainly survive it again.

GALLAGHER: When the Germans took Paris, they took France. Paris was the parish pump of France. But Moscow isn't Russia.

DURDIN: Yes, as far as their productive capacity is concerned, Moscow and the Donetz basin are already almost lost to Russia, but the Russians are fighting as vigorously as ever, bringing up more men and munitions to the front every day. It's quite evident they have tremendous reserves of war materials and very large productive capacity in the Urals.

GALLAGHER: What do you think, Yeh? Will the Japanese apply these Western parallels to the Far East? They're good imitators. I mean, supposing that the Germans did take Moscow, would the Japanese take that as the green light for an attack on Siberia?

DURDIN: Just a minute, Yeh, before you answer. I doubt if Japan would attack Siberia if Moscow fell. I think Russia will always keep strong regular forces in the Far East. And moreover, you'll remember that Russian partisan fighters in the Far East ran the Japanese ragged in the early twenties, when the Japanese were in occupation of Eastern Siberia.

YEH: Yes, and to answer Gallagher's question as well, I think the Japanese ought to realise that the fall of Moscow, even if it did take place, wouldn't hand them Eastern Siberia on a plate, just as when they took Nanking they discovered much too late that it wasn't the end of China. In fact, China's resistance became stiffer after the fall of Nanking.

GALLAGHER: What is the secret, Yeh, if it is a secret, of the ability of the Chinese to fight the Japanese during the last four years? How is it that they have been able to carry on for such a long time?

YEH: Well, in the first place, the Japanese army is not so

much more mechanised than ours as to make the difference count, and since the fall of Nanking, we have been fighting primarily a mobile war. We have been extremely cautious and economical in our methods of warfare. We would not venture into anything where we would have to bring up a huge amount of arms and man-power, and it is only by being extremely cautious and economic that we have been able to carry on this war to what it is today. Another of our primary considerations is to allow the Japanese to take points, but we never allow them to keep their lines of communications intact. This is carried out by the guerilla units.

GALLAGHER: What I cannot understand is why the Japanese, who have copied the Germans so sedulously in the past, have not adopted their blitz warfare and struck in from the East Coast of China with armoured columns and literally cut China into sections like a chocolate cake; these armoured columns to be assisted by what is known as political organisers. Such a move would disrupt the whole country, cutting it to pieces.

YEH: They are far behind when compared with the German armies. The Japanese army is not as good as it was reputed to be before we took up arms. I suppose a second explanation would be that when the Japanese started the war they considerably under-rated us and over-rated themselves. Take the hostilities in Shanghai. In the beginning they fought with marines, and found that they were not sufficiently good and had to bring in the regulars from Japan. But when they found that our resistance was being continued, they brought in better grades of soldiers from Japan, and have from time to time brought in increasingly better and better grades, - but with declining morale. One very interesting thing in this connection is the reputation of the Kwangtung army.

GALLAGHER: What's that?

YEH: That's the Japanese army in Manchuria, which was once thought to be very good. But it didn't take the Japanese general staff long to find out that the KWANGTUNG army was not as good as it was reputed to be. Then in China itself they had to bring in fresh troops again from Japan, - after they occupied Nanking, to continue the drive. The Japanese explanation has been that they have not pulled out their best forces. They are supposed to be reserving their crack troops for Russia. I don't know how true that is. I personally think that that is only a kind of camouflage of the essential weakness in the quality of their troops. I think they have brought in to China some of their crack troops, for instance, the famous division which fought in the Teierhchwang.

DURDIN: And there's the Dohara 14; certainly one of the best Japanese divisions.

YEH: During the first six months or so, they used armaments which were more or less out of date.

GALLAGHER: So did the Germans.

YEH: After the first year, they brought in all kinds of bullets and rifles and machine-guns made very recently in Japan.

GALLAGHER: Yes. There's one thing I cannot understand, Yeh. You admit that the Chinese have been sadly under-armed and equipped. The Japanese on the other hand have had years of preparation in building tanks, guns, aeroplanes, and so on. The Japanese have certainly got something, as in fifty years they have learnt not only to build and design, but also to run that most complicated single piece of machinery - the battleship.

GALLAGHER: If a people can do that from scratch in fifty years, how is it that when they started this war against you they have not been able to progress further.

DURDIN: I think, Gallagher, we must discuss the real strength of the Chinese.

GALLAGHER: What is it?

DURDIN: Man-power. The Chinese have been able to amass what equipment they have at vital points.

GALLAGHER: Where do they get their equipment from?

DURDIN: A good deal from Czechoslovakia and America, before the war broke out. There has also been a steady flow of the heavier materials from Russia since the beginning. Some of it has been lost, some are still at strategic points in the country.

YEH: And another point which people often leave out of the picture is the vastness of territory in China.

DURDIN: And the lack of communications.

YEH: We can open a new front at any time. Japan has roughly one million soldiers in China tied up. To really cover all the sectors, and to be in readiness to attack at any moment, the Japanese Army would have to have at least five times its present strength in China, that is, five million, which they can ill afford. And if they had adopted the German blitz tactics, they would have had to spend at least ten to twenty times what they have spent in the last four years. And they are feeling the economic strain with the war lengthened as it is. It's a physical impossibility now for Japan to mobilise her topmost line of fighting forces.

GALLAGHER: And the strength of your guerrillas is remarkable. I saw a copy of a Chinese staff map in London some months ago, showing the Japanese occupied areas, and within these perimeters there were tiny dots representing packs of guerrillas. The map looked like a colander.

YEH: In the first year of the war, our guerrilla units were

YEH: not at all organised. There were certain areas turned over to these free lancers where they could do almost everything. In the last two years, however, we have worked out the technique of running guerrillas in different areas - the terrain, the distance between villages, and the presence or absence of railway lines have a good deal to do with the specific work of the guerrillas.

GALLAGHER: What about your aircraft. We have seen representatives from America and other places, referred to as American tourists - American recruits more air-minded than the average young American - groups of these tourists going to China - do they instruct or carry out operational flying?

YEH: From the general information I have, they are supposed to re-organise our ground crews, and also a certain amount of coaching and training work. They will probably be called upon to defend the Burma Road. I'm not able to say they will do any actual fighting.

DURDIN: Well, if they saw any Japanese planes, I don't think they'd exactly turn and run.

YEH: We have really now more pilots trained than planes, and a good many of our pilots have been complaining they are not getting the planes to fly about.

GALLAGHER: How's their flying, Durdin. You must have seen quite a number of them.

DURDIN: The Japanese I think have done some good flying in China, although most of the time they have not had strong opposition. Their raids have been as much terroristic as anything. They have bombed civilian centres as often as they have military objectives.

YEH: Of course, all this talk about the Japanese being flat-footed, and consequently not for flying is all nonsense.

GALLAGHER: And there's the story that because they eat polished rice they're subject to beri-beri, and, therefore, can't fly.

DURDIN: And have no sense of equilibrium because they carry their babies on their mothers' backs.

YEH: Our Air Force, you know, has been trained by different types of pilot, - Americans, Italians and Russians. In fact, we were the first to discover that the Italians were no good. Instead of building up the air force, they nearly ruined it.

GALLAGHER: How were the Russians, Yeh? Very tough, weren't they?

YEH: From what I have heard, they are very well trained and disciplined. The interesting thing is, Durdin, that you Americans won't get away from the American standard of living, - oranges and ice-cream. The Russians had no idea of comfort, and they didn't think they were there to do important work for China. All they did was to carry out the instructions of their squadron commander. There has been a certain amount of disparity between Russian and American methods of training, but from now on the Chinese Air Force will have the assistance of American advisers. I think our progress might be much quicker if we have one group of people running the whole show, don't you think, Durdin?

DURDIN: I know there is quite a difference between American and Russian tactics, especially pursuit flying. The American tactic is to attack as a group; the Russians do more individual fighting. They just plunge right in and go for their man, but the Americans try to synchronize their attacks.

GALLAGHER: So do the Germans, Durdin.

DURDIN: Perhaps Russian tactics have changed now. Two years ago they used the other tactics, and the Russian pilots proved themselves to be very brave. Having discussed things in general in the Far East, what do you think, Gallagher, of the Japanese moves as far as war in the Pacific and Malaya is concerned?



GALLAGHER: I think it's again a question for the democracies. There's the American fleet, and the man-power of the Chinese, and it should be possible for us to obtain a quick victory.

DURDIN: How do you think the Jap's attack here will develop?

GALLAGHER: Who says they are going to attack?

DURDIN: If and when.

YEH: Can I say something about what I understand to be the Japanese policy. You see, for years the Japanese have been faced with the problem of whether to expand on the land or towards the south. To the Japanese, especially to people like Tanaka, it is a question of continental or oceanic policy. When they took Manchuria, and subsequently other parts of China, it seemed that they had been driven into the continental policy, but for the last year or so they have thought over the whole problem, and now I think they believe that a continental policy is not enough in order to survive in the Far East. She is waiting to see which will offer the most. What the Japanese are doing in Indo-China can be interpreted as a preparation for a fortified base in the south. They see very clearly that in order to be in a position to negotiate with Great Britain and America, they have to put themselves into a threatening position in the south, and the first step they have taken is the partial occupation of Indo-China. There has been a good deal of speculation as to what the Japanese will do next in Indo-China. I think, in the absence of sufficient reports, we can very safely say that the Japanese, whatever they may do, will turn Indo-China into a military base, and that base is not for action against China alone, but also for the general Pacific. I think if you will look at Indo-China from the point of view of a military base, a fortified military base, you may be less credulous when you read these daily reports in the papers. I'm not sure Japan will not attack Yunnan. It's an extreme possibility. If Japan should

YEH: launch an attack upon Yunnan, the fact still remains that Indo-China is being made a military base to face the general Pacific situation, and any further infiltration into Thailand would be along the same lines. The question is whether Great Britain and America can afford to allow Japan to settle in Indo-China and America can afford to allow Japan to settle in Indo-China and Thailand without being in grave danger. Whether it would be too late for America and Great Britain when Japan strikes.

GALLAGHER: What's your opinion, Durdin, as an average intelligent American, on the efforts your country has made so far in regard to the Pacific?

DURDIN: America is taking an increasing interest in the Pacific defence problem. We are well able to hold the Philippine Islands now. I think preparations will be carried still further, though we are already quite strong there. As far as the American position in the Pacific is concerned, it would be to our advantage to play for time awhile.

GALLAGHER: Looking at it from the point of view of America standing alone, perhaps. But she does not, of course, stand alone. We're all in this together, - America, Britain, China, the Dutch East Indies, and now Russia.

YEH: Yes, the A-B-C-D group is beginning to be more than a name and does ensure the collective safety of the democratic countries of Asia. And it's rapidly becoming more and more effective. For instance, British and American aid to China is going to flow in with increasing speed over the Burma Road as a result of the study of its problems by American experts. The volume of traffic has been increased three-fold in the last six months, and it's estimated that it can be increased another four-fold. Japan is bogged down now in China; we can begin to look ahead to the day when she'll be trampled into the mud.

DURDIN: Well, I see by the clock on the wall there that our time's just about up. I think, in any case that we've reached the crux of the matter. The measure of the growth and increasing solidarity of the democratic block here in the East is indicated by the cloudiness of the political atmosphere in Japan. She doesn't know where to turn.

GALLAGHER: Just going round in small circles, eh?

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